# Rev. 8 (FINAL)

Guille: I think we can put this one to rest. I have made minor grammatical or stylistic suggestions that Inaki needs to resolve.

Inti is blind and works at an NGO devoted to improving the welfare of the blind community. We met socially over a year ago and he illustrated to me the daily challenges faced by blind people by describing the difficulties and risks of visiting his grandmother. It was not that she lived too far or that he did not know the streets, but the famously undisciplined Buenos Aires drivers made intersections unsafe, scaffolding and unmarked trenches left by public works crews popped up everywhere, delivery trucks blocked sidewalks, and so on. As usual, my mind switched into problem-solving mode. I felt confident I could create an app to offer Inti and the rest of the blind community optimal routes and to keep track of transitory obstacles. After all, I had access to very powerful tools and I had solved other complicated problems before. A few days later I persuaded a couple of friends to give it a try.

The problem, however, appeared to become increasingly complicated as the days went by. Technology was not the issue, our lack of awareness of the experience of a blind person and our built-in biases were. For example, we took for granted that users would find it natural to interact with the app using the phone’s touchscreen interface. We were wrong, so we launched into designing audio features to provide them with feedback and in doing so I discovered that, in contrast to the Android platform, the iPhone’s accessibility support was wonderful. As I dug deeper into the iPhone accessibility functionality I was surprised by the elegance and the intelligence of the solutions implemented there. I was in awe of the effort and care that had been invested by a host of anonymous developers. For the first time in my experience, a piece of tech revealed to me the goodwill and the compassion of many smart people whom I would probably never meet. I felt close to them, was inspired by them, and wanted to become one of them. I was familiar with the term “software with a social purpose”, but only then did I start to get the depth of the meaning.

The weeks went by and we worked around one obstacle after another, but what we had underestimated were the non-technical issues. For example, the public works department bureaucrats did not think our project was worth their time, so they did not give us access to work schedules. We were not prepared to let that stop us though, and our frustration spawned an experiment in crowdsourcing with students at our school. Many of our schoolmates agreed to watch and report obstacles as they walked to and from school. Their input helped us validate crowdsourcing as a viable and effective approach and as with “social purpose”, “crowdsourcing”, here, started meaning something completely different to me. I had talked about “crowdsourcing” so many times, but as a solution, an approach. In this case, that crowd had names and faces and I could see the impact of their volunteering. I had heard “it takes a village to raise a child” and I then realized that it takes a community to build software with a social purpose.

With the help of the student body, we had built a voice-controlled app, that recommended the best routes to take for a blind person, balancing time, obstacles and distance. It would also alert them of the presence of nearby dangers, their location and type.

We showed it to Inti and his colleagues. They were incredulous at first, then excited, then emotional. Watching Inti master the app’s interface made me feel fulfilled as I had never felt before. I realized I want to dedicate myself to socially-minded work in the future.

# Rev. 7

Inti is blind and works at an NGO devoted to improve the welfare of the blind community. We met socially over a year ago and he illustrated me the daily challenges faced by blind people by describing the difficulties and risks of visiting his grandmother. It wasn’t that she lived too far or that he didn’t know the streets, but the famously indisciplined Buenos Aires drivers made intersections unsafe, scaffolding and unmarked trenches left by public works crews popped up everywhere, delivery trucks blocked sidewalks, and so on. As usual, my mind switched into problem-solving mode. I felt confident I could create an app to offer Inti and the rest of the blind community optimal routes and to keep track of transitory obstacles. After all, I had access to very powerful tools and I had solved other complicated problems before. A few days later I persuaded a couple of friends to give it a try.

The problem appeared to become more and more complicated as the days went by. Technology was not the issue, our lack of awareness of the experience of a blind person and built-in biases were. For example, we took for granted that users would find it natural to interact with the app using a classic touchscreen interface. We were wrong, so we launched into designing audio features to provide them with feedback and in doing so I discovered that, in contrast to the Android platform, the iPhone’s accessibility support was wonderful. As I dug deeper into the iPhone accessibility functionality I was surprised by the elegance and the intelligence of the solutions implemented there. I was in awe of the effort and care that had been invested by a host of seemingly anonymous developers. For the first time in my experience a piece of tech revealed to me the good will and the compassion of many smart people whom I would probably never meet. I felt close to them, was inspired by them, and wanted to become one of them. I was familiar with the term “software with a social purpose”, but only then did I truly understand its meaning.

The weeks went by and we worked around one obstacle after another, but what we had never anticipated was facing non-technical issues. For example, the Public Works department bureaucrats didn’t think our project was worth wasting time on, so they denied us access to work schedules. We were not prepared to let that stop us though, and our frustration spawned an experiment in crowdsourcing with students at our school. Many of our schoolmates agreed to watch and report obstacles as they walked to and from school. Their input helped us validate crowdsourcing as a viable and effective approach and as with “social purpose”, “crowdsourcing”, here, started meaning something completely different to me. And this hit me in a completely novel way. I had talked about “crowdsourcing” so many times, but only ever as a solution, an approach. In this case, that crowd had names and faces and I could see the impact of their volunteering. I had heard of the phrase “it takes a village to raise a child” and discovered that it takes a community to build software with a social purpose.

When we showed Inti and his colleagues what we had prototyped and how we were going about implementing the app, they were incredulous at first, then excited, then emotional. Watching Inti master the app interface made me feel fulfilled as I had never felt before. It made me realize I want to dedicate myself to socially minded work in the future.

# Common App Rev 6 (T y G)

Inti is blind and works at an NGO devoted to improve the welfare of the blind. We met socially over a year ago and he illustrated to me the daily challenges faced by blind people by describing the difficulties and risks of visiting his grandmother. It wasn’t that she lived too far or that he didn’t know the streets, but the famously indisciplined Buenos Aires drivers made intersections unsafe, scaffolding and unmarked trenches left by public works crews popped up everywhere, delivery trucks blocked sidewalks, and so on. As usual, my mind switched into problem-solving mode. I felt confident I could create an app to offer Inti and his clients optimal routes and to keep track of transient obstacles. After all, I had access to very powerful tools and I had solved other complicated problems before. A few days later I persuaded a couple of friends to give it a try.

The problem appeared to become more and more complicated as the days went by. Technology was not the issue, our lack of awareness of the experience of a blind person and built-in biases were. For example, we took for granted that users would find it natural to interact with the app using the mobile phone keyword. Not so, so we launched into designing audio features to provide them with feedback and in doing so I discovered that, in contrast to the Android platform, the iPhone’s accessibility support was wonderful. As I dug deeper into the iPhone accessibility functionality I marvelled at the elegance, the richness, and the intelligence of the solutions implemented there. I was in awe at the effort and care that had been invested by a host of anonymous developers. For the first time in my experience a piece of tech revealed to me the good will and the compassion of many smart people whom I would never meet. I felt close to them, was inspired by them, and wanted to become one of them. I was familiar with the term “software with a social purpose”, but only then did I truly understand its meaning.

The weeks went by and we worked around one obstacle after another. We left some non-technical issues for later. For example, how to get work schedules from the Public Works department, whose bureaucrats did not think our project worth wasting time on. We were not prepared to let that stop us and our frustration spawned an experiment in crowdsourcing with students at our school. Many of our schoolmates agreed to watch and report obstacles as they walked to and from school. Their input helped us validate crowdsourcing as a viable and effective approach and as with “social purpose”, “crowdsourcing”, here, meant something completely different to me. And this hit me in a completely novel way. I had talked about “crowdsourcing” so many times, but only ever as a solution, an approach. In this case, that crowd had names and faces and I could see the impact of their volunteering. I had heard of the phrase “it takes a village” and discovered that it takes a community to build software with a social purpose.

When we showed Inti and his colleagues what we had prototyped and how we were going about implementing the app, they were incredulous at first, then excited, then emotional. Watching Inti master the app interface made me feel fulfilled as I had never felt before. As such, I hope to dedicate myself to socially minded work in the future.

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# Common App Rev 5 (T y G)

* Describe a problem you've solved or a problem you'd like to solve. It can be an intellectual challenge, a research query, an ethical dilemma-anything that is of personal importance, no matter the scale. Explain its significance to you and what steps you took or could be taken to identify a solution.

Comentario guille:

*En su forma presente, el contexto es tu proyecto con Inti, el challenge: darte cuenta que no todo se resuelve con “tech”. Tu insight: como con el proverbio “it takes a village to raise a child”, una aplicacion con proposito social requiere que la comunidad una sus esfuerzos, el app no es un producto tecnico sino un producto social, que encarna las intuiciones, aprendizajes, esfuerzos, etc… de muchisima gente que encuentra significado en lo que esta haciendo. Por lo tanto, el significado para vos: que partiste con una vision “techie” y “personalista” (yo voy a construir esto) de lo que es un desarrollo y terminaste con una perspectiva totalmente nueva, la emocion de ver la contribucion desinteresada de los demas y aportar tu grano de arena a un esfuerzo comun.*

Inti is blind and he works at an NGO devoted to improve the welfare of the blind. We met socially over a year ago and he illustrated to me the daily challenges faced by blind people by describing the difficulties and risks of visiting his grandmother. It wasn’t that she lived too far or that he didn’t know the streets, but the famously indisciplined Buenos Aires drivers made intersections unsafe, scaffolding or unmarked trenches left by public works crews would pop up everywhere, sidewalks blocked by delivery trucks, and the list went on and on. As usual, my mind switched into problem-solving mode. I felt optimistic, confident I could create an app to offer Inti and his clients optimal routes and to keep track of transient obstacles. After all I had access to very powerful tools and I had solved many complicated problems before. A few days later I persuaded a couple of friends to give it a try.

The problem appeared to become more and more complicated as the days went by. Technology was not the issue, our lack of awareness of the experience of a blind person, our built-in biases were. For example, we took for granted that our users would find it natural to interact with the app using the mobile phone keyword. Not so, so we launch into designing audio features to provide them with feedback and in doing so I discovered something in the guts of the platform that elicited in me an emotional response: the Android platform offered almost no support for accessibility but the iPhone instead was wonderful. As I dug deeper into the iPhone accessibility functionality I marvelled at the elegance, the richness and the intelligence of the solutions. I was in awe at the effort and care that had been invested by a host of anonymous developers. For the first time in my experience a piece of tech revealed to me the good will and the compassion of many smart people whom I would never meet. I felt close to them, I was inspired them, I wished to become one of them. I had used the expression “software with a social purpose”, but then, I started to find meaning in it.

The weeks went by, we worked around one obstacle after another, we made progress, as programmers do. We left some non-technical issues for later. For example, how to get work schedules from the Public Works department. As it turned out, the bureaucrats judged that a team of teenagers did not have the right clearances to access that information. We were not prepared to let that stop us and our frustration with the institution spawned an experiment in crowdsourcing with students at our school. Many of our schoolmates accepted to watch and report obstacles as they walked to and from school. Their inputs help us validated crowdsourcing as a viable and effective surveillance approach. And this hit me in a completely novel way. As with “social purpose” I had talked about “crowdsourcing” so many times, but I conceived it as a solution, an approach, a technique. In this case, that crowed had faces and names, engaged in a behavior I was familiar with and I could see the impact of their volunteering. I had heard of the African proverb: “It takes a village to raise a child”. I learned that it takes a community to build a social app.

When we showed Inti and his colleagues what we had prototyped and how we were going about implementing the app, they were incredulous at first, then excited, then emotional. Watching Inti master the app interface made me feel fulfilled as I had never felt before. I have found my vocation, I will design systems with people to help others.

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# Rev. 1

I had been playing a new game that had just come out with a few friends, so Discord and WhatsApp were still open. Spotify was playing in the background, filling the room with music. I knew what drove me forward. I was set on what I wanted to write about, yet I was reading the lists of predefined essay prompts. It didn’t make sense, they were supposed to structure my essay, to support it, but I felt limited, I was trying to cram my topic into restrictive prompts that pointed to other subjects. I ignored that fact and kept on reading the list until I found the last one, the “Create your own adventure” of essays. Recognizing that choosing one already expressed the idea I was trying to convey, I clicked it without doubting for even a second and began writing this introduction. By the time I finished it, I already had an idea about how I would structure my very own essay.

A few months ago I had a very similar realization to the one I mentioned in the introduction, but to understand it, we have to go back to my childhood. When I younger, even before high school, I already liked taking things apart. It didn’t matter what it was, what was indeed important was for me to be impressed by what I saw inside said gadget. By primary school, all household items had been cracked open, and there was nothing else for me to see, to discover. It was then when I discovered electronics. They allowed me to marvel at the way a device worked for much longer and that generated in me an intrigue that I hadn’t felt before.

After a while of seeing how simple electronics worked, I started wondering what would happen if I combined them. That’s how some of my first inventions were born. Out of old PC coolers, I built a boat that I would follow by walking along the border of the pool. I used the vibration motors of a Play Station 2 controller to create a simple arm massager.

With time my project started combining more and more complex components, and I started watching YouTube videos for inspiration. Once at an electronics shop, buying the items I needed to build a tesla coil, a random person in line next to me commented on how what I was building was quite dangerous, and suggested I researched a name I had never heard about before: “Arduino”. It turned out to be a tiny computer that allowed me to interact with all the bits and pieces of electronics I had encounter until then. I was fascinated. I could tell the computer with words, kind of strange ones, but words non the least, what to do and how to interact.

As I delved more and more into programming I started building more complex projects, but it all started to lose significance for me. I started forming a routine that had the opposite effect on me than the one I sought when I started my journey. The routine was like so: I would have an idea, I would code it as fast as I could, and then I would almost never touch it again.

It was because I felt this routing forming, that this year I decided to become what at my school is called Project Manager. I would abstract from the technical aspect of a project, while still keeping in touch with it, and drive forward the project with ideas, with a plan for every team member.

Feeling the difference in excitement between developing short projects for myself and creating a managing a dedicated team, was what lead me to find a first few clients and create my own company, an institution that would allow me to continue doing what I enjoyed in perpetuity.

# Rev. 2

**Reflect on a time when you questioned or challenged a belief or idea. What prompted your thinking? What was the outcome?**

* Development is the thing for me.
* Andrés, asked me if I wanted to become a Project Manager
* I had an inner fight, between the safe bet, staying in my zone and developing, and trying something new
* There were risks, that made me think long about the topic
* I decided I was going to give my best effort, because if I was never planning on leaving my comfort zone, then I may well keep doing the same small projects as always.

## Topic 1

When I was starting to write computer programs, I thought of every problem in a very technical way. I didn't think in terms of requirements or available resources, I thought in terms of variables, numbers and booleans.

I remember that during one conversation with my uncle, he told my that I was looking at things wrong. When you plan to build a house, you think about entrances, rooms, windows, you don’t think about how each brick in the construction will be laid.

At the time it didn’t make much sense, and I forgot about the conversation until the beginning of this year, when I was asked what role I would like to have in my school’s annual project team. Trying to find an answer to my lasting doubt about what my uncle meant, I decided to step out of my comfort zone and chose to be a project manager for a group called Glös.

Our team consisted of two designers, three programmers and myself. We chose to work with CILSA, an NGO dedicated to helping blind people and tackled the problem of navigation. We were moved by the story of one of CILSA’S members, Inti, who told us that he couldn’t visit his grandmother, because he was unable to leave his house and walk for more than a few blocks. While someone with regular vision, is able to dodge random obstacles in the street, he would walk right into them.

After a few weeks of brainstorming, we found a solution.: an app like Google Maps, but focused on avoiding obstacles in the street.

BLA BLA BAL ABLA BLA

It was the first time I saw the true impact of a solution I had helped build. In that exact moment I finally understood what my uncle was trying to teach me back then, and in the process, I discovered I had a passion for something much bigger than just writing code. Inti’s joy inspired me to find more people in need of solutions to the problems they face every day of their lives.

## Topic 2

It was the beginning of the year. As part of my school courses, I had to choose a project idea and with whom I wanted to carry it out, and most importantly which role I wanted to have. For the past two years, I had chosen to be a developer, once creating an Alzheimer's treatment program, and in another occasion creating software for Satellogic, a satellite company. This was what I was accustomed to.

But this year something change, a new position was created. One could now choose to be a “project manager”. I had never heard of such term, and once I looked it up, I didn’t think it fit my characteristics. Even though I had always carried out different projects since I was a kid, I’d never worked with a big team, and was even less prepared to manage one.

While thinking about what role to choose, it struck me, nobody was prepared. We were in highschool, and no one had been and even less led a big team. So I decided to give it a try.

Right after starting, I was a bit confused, as were most of my groupmates. We weren’t sure what my role was exactly. With the weeks, things started to become clearer. As more and more requirements were given to my team, the role of manager started to make sense.

# Rev. 3

**Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.**

I met Inti in the beginning of 2019. He was a part of an NGO that helped blind people live better lives in society. He told me he couldn’t visit his grandmother, who lived only a few blocks, because he wasn’t able to navigate through the streets. The problem wasn’t that he didn’t know where to turn, but that he kept walking straight into shops, people, and tripping with bumps in the sidewalk.

We got together with a couple of friends and decided we were going to find a solution to his problem. We wanted to create an app that would tell Inti where to turn an how much to walk, but that would also alert him of nearby obstacles, and that would recommend to him the best route to take.

It wasn’t an easy job, and as we kept working, it seemed to become harder and harder. The first problem we faced was that of interaction. We needed to find a way for Inti to tell the program where he wanted to go. We take for granted we can type on a smartphone keyboard, but he can’t.

After a while we developed a solution that allowed him to hear the location of every button on the screen and it gave him live audio feedback on what he was typing, so that he could be sure that the app was going to take him to where he wanted. After having solved that problem, we continued working, but we quickly faced another problem.

We didn’t have any place to get information about potholes, or any other obstacles in the sidewalks. I started talking with the government, but they kept making excuses and didn’t want to release “sensitive” information about their locations. I got tired of dealing with them, and wanted to find a solution as soon as possible, so that the team wouldn’t have to halt the development. Riding the car one day I had an epiphany, we could rely on crowdsourcing. People would report problems with the sidewalks in the city, and based on the reports, we were able to generate better routes. That problem out of the way, we continued developing.

By the end of the year we already had a prototype. We called Inti and the people at CILSA to come to our school. We showed him what we had built and gave it to Inti to try. He was incredulous at first, but once he saw it really worked, he got so excited that he almost started crying. He thanked us immensely for the work with had done for the blind community.

In that exact moment, I felt a fulfillment I had never felt before. It made me realize that I want to dedicate my technical knowledge to finding and building solutions to the problems society faces every single day.

# Rev. 4

I met Inti in the beginning of 2019. He was a part of an NGO that helped blind people live better. Talking about life he mentioned he couldn’t visit his grandmother, who lived only a few blocks, because he had trouble navigating through the city. The problem wasn’t that he didn’t know where to turn, but that he kept walking straight into shops, people, and tripping with bumps in the sidewalk.

We got together with a couple of friends and decided we were going to find a solution to his problem. We were set on creating an app that would tell Inti where to turn an how much to walk, but that would also alert him of nearby obstacles, and that would recommend to him the best route to take.

It wasn’t an easy job, and as we kept working, it seemed to become harder and harder. The first problem we faced was that of interaction. We needed to find a way for Inti to tell the program where he wanted to go. We take for granted we can type on a smartphone keyboard, but he can’t. After a while we developed a solution that allowed him to have live audio feedback of what he was doing, so that he knew what he had typed and here he had pressed.

We thought that was going to be the last problem, but it turned out it wasn’t. We had no source of information for the obstacles in the city. I attempted to solve it by contacting the government, who I knew had this information, but they weren’t willing to give it to “a couple of kids”. I was not going to let the team’s development get halted, so I had to find a solution. Coming back from school one day, I had an idea, what if instead of asking an institution for information, we let everybody collaborate with their knowledge. We decided it was the way to go, and after we finished implementing it, we contacted Inti and the people at the NGO and told him we had a surprise.

We showed them what we had built and gave it to Inti to try. He was incredulous at first, but once he tried it and realized it worked, he got so excited that he almost started crying. He thanked us immensely for the work with had done for him and for the blind community.

Watching Inti using our app, I felt so fulfilled. I had never felt like that before, and that I want to dedicate my knowledge and ability to build solutions for the problem

# Rev. 5

**Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.**

* For the essay on scoliosis, go to the Long Essay file in the Rice folder.